

Parable of the Vineyard - Scriptures

Psalm 80v8-9 (A vine out of Egypt).

You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

Isaiah 5v1-6 (The Song of the Vineyard).

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: my Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" "And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it." For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry *for help*

Lk 20v9-18 (The parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard)

⁹ He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. ¹⁰ At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. ¹² He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. ¹³ "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴ "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "God forbid!" ¹⁷ Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.'" ¹⁹ The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

Also see Matthew 21v33-46 & Mark 12v1-12

Matthew 5v10-12 [Message] ¹⁰ "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. "Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

Parable of the Vineyard - Talk

Anger

When was the last time you were angry? Who or what made you angry? What do you do with that anger? Do you kick-back verbally or physically the old OT adage 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth'? How long do you let it last? How do we respond when people tell lies about us and persecute us, and unfairly take away what is ours?

In today's parable, the hero of the story is the owner of a vineyard. He becomes angered by his bad tenants. He is in a position of power and could have these enemies destroyed. Instead out of love, he chooses to be totally vulnerable, and risks the life of his own son. It's a reckless decision, but a choice that speaks into our own Christian lives, which we will explore today.

Song of the Vineyard (Is 5 v1-6)

We start our journey back in the Old Testament book of Isaiah. There are very few parables in the Old Testament, but the 'Song of the Vineyard' is one of them, and Isaiah delivers it with great poetry and word play in the Hebrew. Isaiah sings a song to his Well-beloved, a song about God and his vineyard. He sung of how his beloved God, had planted a vineyard on what was known to be a very fruitful hill, and made every provision for it to be a great success. The ground was carefully prepared, dug and cleared of stones. It was planted with good stock, the choicest vines. It was protected with a tower in its midst. Provision was made for the fruit to be processed, by building a winepress. Surely the expectations would be realised, there would be a harvest of good grapes and fine wine would flow out of this vineyard.

Instead it produced the Wolfsbane, the wild vine. This is worst than having a poor crop or even no harvest. The wild vine (2 Kings 4:39), does bear beautiful berries, but they are bitter, foul-smelling and poisonous in nature. All the effort spent on preparing such a good vineyard has come to nothing at all.

Then there is an appeal to Judah as to what the owner should do with such an unproductive vineyard. The song continues by telling them what God is going to do anyway with it. God will not only abandon the vineyard but will oversee its destruction. " I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it."

Isaiah then make it clear that the vineyard is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the vine plants. The Vine was taken out of Egypt into a lush new promised land, for which God cleared for them, the stones being the enemy tribes that lived there. From this vine, he wanted the fruit of justice but found oppression, he wanted righteousness but found the cry of violence. The foul poisonous berries were a good metaphor the self-pride and false religion of Gods unfaithful people in Judah". An expert storyteller doesn't have to explain the punch line, and Isaiah didn't explicitly mention the destruction of Judah. But once the connection between Judah and the vineyard had been made by the Prophet, then for the prophecy to be fulfilled the coming Babylonian invasion was inevitable.

So we have a parable where the expectation from God was for the production of a righteous and just people under God, and what was produced was false religion, oppression and violence in Judah. This led to its own destruction, as Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took the elite captive to Babylon (in 586BC), and it was 70 years of captivity before the Jews could return to the rubble of Solomon's temple, and start the rebuild of Jerusalem.

Context – Triumphant Entry & Temple Coup

Over 500 years had passed since the reconstruction began and the temple was now the hub of life in Jerusalem, spreading across more than 30 acres. About AD30 one man travelled from a high mountain in the North, the Mount of Transfiguration, probably mount Hermon, where he had heard Gods voice say 'This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased'. He had travelled South through Jericho, to the Mount of Olives, and then rode a donkey to Jerusalem. It was a symbolic fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (e.g. Zech 9v9). After 3 years of ministry much of it on the move with his Northern band of disciples avoiding the authorities, Jesus comes out in the open, and by his triumphal entry affirms himself as the Jewish messiah, the God King. It was a few days before Passover, and

Jerusalem was packed with 300,000 plus pilgrims. Jesus appalled by the trading and cheating in the temple courtyard planned a coup of the temple.

It was officially prohibited to use a route through the temple as a short-cut but this had now become common practice. In a well-planned attack, Jesus with perhaps 300 or more men under his control, blocked the routes through the temple, then set about driving out both vendors and buyers. Jesus cries out to the authorities 'God says my temple will be a House of Prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves', indicating that the act of sacrificing to God had been corrupted by the religious rulers. Then with a home-made whip he drives out the sheep and goats on sale for sacrifice, he lets loose the doves, tips over the merchants money tables, and he kicks over their seats. Jesus and his rebels may have had control of the temple for several hours preventing the afternoon sacrifices from taking place. It was so well planned and executed there was nothing the Temple Guard could have done to prevent it. They were outnumbered and with the protection of the people's popularity behind Jesus, the rulers had to wait and seethe in private, until Jesus and his followers peacefully withdrew from the temple. The rulers must have been inundated with complaints from angry traders who had lost money and livestock, or found their access blocked. Yet much worse to the rulers, Jesus had challenged their ways and their authority over the temple practices.

Jesus was soon back in the temple, no longer angry, but going about his normal business of teaching the crowds of normal people. Some of whom were probably a little richer having helped themselves to money off the ground that had been lost by the money changers, or to some livestock that had been driven out the temple! When the temple ruling council, the Sanhedrin, learnt that Jesus was back then a delegation was sent to him consisting of the three main groupings within their ruling council i.e. chief priests, teachers of the law and elders. A formidable group. They asked him by what authority Jesus presumed to do such things. Rather than giving a direct answer, Jesus told the assembled crowd and the enquiring rulers this parable of the Vineyard.

A recast parable

Jesus is retelling Isaiah's parable in his own way, giving it new shape. The owner plants a vineyard. In Marks account the parable starts the same as Isaiah's version, as he builds a watchtower and fence for security, and installs a winepress. Those who loved their scriptures would have immediately made the connection to the Isaiah song. A new vineyard was a major long-term investment, from which you would get no returns for at least 4 years, so the owner was a man of capital.

Much of the rural Roman Empire was controlled by wealthy landowners whose income from the land allowed them lives of total leisure. The owners would often live in cities far away and have free peasants in as tenants. In Isaiah's version the owner is directly farming the vineyard. But having a long-distance owner allows Jesus to introduce the new aspect of having tenants that have been entrusted with the farming of the vineyard, and in return will pay the owner a fixed proportion of the proceeds, which could be 25% to 50% of their crop or earnings.

Servants and Prophets

If it takes 4 years to produce a crop, then it would have been at least this length of time before the owner was sending out a servant for his Masters share of the fruits from the vineyard. However the servant is not received kindly, instead he was beaten and sent away empty-handed. The Owner tried sending a second servant, perhaps it was a mistake and he needed more evidence to accompany the servant to better identify his Master. But it had not been a mistake and the second servant was both beaten like the first and then treated in other shameful ways then sent packing. Not to be deterred, the owner then sends a third, perhaps his most able and persuasive servant, to the vineyard. This time he is treated even worse, and is not just beaten but injured and then thrown off the estate. In Marks version the third servant is killed. As the parable progresses, each servant is treated worse than the next. How much violence and insult will the owner take before he acts firmly against the tenants.

For his Jewish audience the treatment of the servants was symbolic of what had gone before with the treatment of Gods prophet. Who were these abused prophets? In the days of Elijah, Queen Jezebel murdered large numbers of Gods prophets, In the reign of Joash, the people stoned the prophet Zechariah, The book of Hebrews (Heb 11v35-38) reports on prophets that were jeered at, put in chains, flogged, stoned, put to the sword and even sawn in two. King

Manasseh of Judah, according to Jewish tradition, had the great prophet Isaiah cut in two, as he hid from him in a tree. If proof was needed, then many of those men were buried in the Valley of Kidron, not far from where Jesus was speaking.

This wasn't just history but was also prophetic about how the followers of Jesus would be treated in the future.

At this point in the parable, with the song of Isaiah firmly in their mind the Jewish listeners will be expecting some swift and harsh retribution to come on the tenants, whilst hoping that there would not be also destruction of the vineyard as was the case in Isaiah's parable. The owner is entitled to contact the authorities, who at this nobleman's request will dispatch an armed company of trained men to raid the vineyard, and arrest the tenants, and bring them to swift justice for their violent actions. Some authorities would be prepared to dispatch trained soldiers to kill the tenants.

But what comes next is even more astonishing and shocking than that.

The Owners decision

The climax of parables is usually in the middle and not at the end. In the key verse 13, Jesus now introduces a speech into the parable. Other parables have similar key speeches (of a man addressing himself) that break into the narration, such as the Prodigal son when he decides to return to his Father whilst in his faraway land.

¹³“Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’

There is no single English word to describe how the Vineyard owner responded. There is a Greek word though – makrothumia (*mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah*). It is about holding a powerful position, and yet choosing vulnerability and calmness in the face of suffering and adversity. It is about giving over your anger to the hands of loving patience. In the Old Testament King Saul was pursuing David in order to kill him, and one night slept in a cave in which David and his men were hiding. David could have killed Saul, and such was the advice of his companions. David put his anger well aside and spared Saul's life thus keeping his own life at risk. It is about costly self-emptying love.

There is a true story of Hussein Bin Tallel, King of Jordan. *One night in the early 1980s, the king was informed by his security police that a group of about 75 Jordanian army officers were at that very moment meeting in a nearby barracks, plotting a military overthrow of the kingdom. The security officers requested permission to surround the barracks and arrest the plotters. After a sombre pause, the king refused and said, “Bring me a small helicopter”. A helicopter was brought. The king climbed in with the pilots and the two of them flew to the barracks and landed on its flat roof. The king told the pilot “If you hear gun shots, fly away at once without me”. Unarmed the king then walked down two flights of stairs and suddenly appeared in the room where the plotters were meeting and quietly said to them. “Gentlemen it has come to my attention that you are meeting here tonight to finalize your plans to overthrow the Government, take over the country and install a military dictator. If you do this, the army will break apart and the country will be plunged into civil war. Tens of thousands of innocent people will die. There is no need for this. Here I am ! Kill me and proceed. That way, only one man will die.” After a moments stunned silence, the rebels as one, rushed forward to kiss the king's hands and feet and pledge loyalty to him for life. King Hussein opted for total vulnerability. He acted nobly and by doing so he fanned into flames the dying embers of the rebels sense of honour.*
[Taken from Jesus through Middle Easter Eyes – Bailey]

In the parable of the Vineyard, God is unmistakably the Vineyard owner, and Jesus places himself into the parable. He takes up his place in the line of great prophets. He is the rightful heir to these ancient prophets and has come to complete their work, challenging Gods people one more time to give to God the honour and obedience due to him. But more than a great prophet he is also the beloved Son. Jesus was confident in this title. Still ringing in his ears were the words from his Father God on the mountain “*This is my beloved Son, whom I love*” (Matthew 17v5). On his triumphal entry he was proclaimed as the Son of David, the God King, the promised Messiah. There is no turning back for him now on the run-up to Passover, so he continues to reveal his true nature by identifying himself as Gods son in this parable.

Despite the shameful treatment and injuries inflicted on the servants, the Vineyard owner holds back his anger towards the tenants, and in a selfless act of love sends his own Son into danger, with the hope that they will recognise him as the Son of the Owner, feel shame for what they have done, acknowledge him for who he is and give him their dues.

Despite the shameful treatment and injuries inflicted on his prophets, God held back his anger towards the Jews, and in a selfless act of love sends his own Son into danger, with the hope that they will recognise him as the Son of God, feel shame for what they have done, acknowledge him for who he is and give him their praise.

Time Fulcrum

For the interpretation of the parable then this key verse is like a time fulcrum. The previous verses were telling in story form what has happened in history. God establishing his people and then sending them prophets to guide them, who were mistreated by the kings and religious leaders. Now God is sending his Son, Jesus as a final chance for them to recognise their shameful ways and to live good lives in truth and righteousness. They still have a chance if they respond well to the Son. The rest of the parable is a prophecy of what will happen next, because Jesus knows their hearts and they will respond to his message.

Killing the son

^{v14} “But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.

There may have been some thought in the minds of the tenants, that if they can occupy the vineyard for enough years without acknowledging the real owner, than they can claim squatters right to the land and the vineyard would legally belong to them. But in reality their violence would have got them expelled by any authority.

In Isaiah’s Song, the Vineyard itself is blamed for producing poisonous fruit, this is referring to Gods chosen race of men living in Judah. The people had consistently turned away from God and pursued evil ways, and would now be destroyed by the Babylonians. In Jesus’ parable there is no criticism of the vineyard, of God’s chosen people, but it is the tenants of the vineyard that have angered God, the religious rulers.

In the first century, the house of Annas controlled the high priestly office for decades. Annas had 5 sons, each held office as High Priest, and he had a son-in-law Caiaphas, who was now in post as High Priest. If asked, they no doubt would have believed that their line would continue to hold this position of power for many more decades. There was no credible challenge to their authority amongst the Jews. That was, until Jesus, had come and challenged their rule, when he took over the temple for the day and cleansed it.

The inheritance

“Let’s kill him, and the **inheritance** will be ours”. The tenants in the parable want the inheritance, but what does this mean? What is the inheritance that the rulers of the Temple wanted to keep, and that Jesus wanted from them. The high priest establishment controlled the temple institution and its set of buildings. However Jesus had no want of land and buildings, or control over the temple and temple sacrifices. That was of no interest to him. However he did have in mind a claim on old inheritance and a new inheritance.

The old. First it was the **spiritual heritage** (i.e. the theological and ethical heritage) that Jesus wanted to wrestle from the house of Annas. They fancied themselves as the rulers of Israel, and Jesus must remind them they are only custodians appointed by God over the vineyard, and not good ones serving themselves rather than God. Jesus saw himself and his disciples as having the right to define what it meant to be faithful to the God of Abraham, and to build on the heritage of Abraham, Moses, the Law and the Prophets. He wanted the right to distil meaning from it for the present and the future. He came to define, to teach and to demonstrate how to live that faithful life, in obedience and faithfulness to what had gone before, not in conflict with Gods true purposes as revealed in the Jewish story; but how to really worship Yahweh in spirit and truth. This heritage and control of worship was now in the hands of those who had laid down a library of legalistic rules, Followers of the Pharisees found the yoke to be heavy and burdensome.

These religious leaders themselves acted all righteous whilst cheating and taking advantage of Gods people, to promote their own self-seeking purposes and elite life-style. Even the amount of meat the priestly families ate had made them twice the size of the normal man. They may have looked the part but Jesus could see into their hearts. Jesus once said to them “ *You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.* “ (Matt 23v27). The spiritual heritage of the Jews needed to be taken away from these corrupt tenants.

The new. Along with this spiritual heritage and being true to God comes the inheritance of eternal life. It is this inheritance of eternal life, which Jesus came to redefine. Eternal life would not be gained by making endless sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. The Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, Sadducees, teachers of the law, elders and scribes all made these sacrifices, but in truth they were a long way from God required of them. There was much argument what this inheritance was and meant. They believed in a great end time banquet, but most thought now that it would be a Jew only affair, and some thought that even amongst the Jews it was selective, and no one with a disability for example would be there. They also disputed what they would be like in the end time with the Sadducees and Pharisees in continual dispute over the issue of bodily resurrection. Jesus came to set a new agenda for this inheritance of eternal life. There would be no more confusion. Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will inherit eternal life.. He came to take away any confusion and made it clear – if you believed in him and followed his way, then you would not perish. Jesus came, so that all could come to the table, Jews and Gentiles, Men and Women, Black and White, Slave and freeman, any one could believe in him and have the inheritance of eternal life.

Despite the shaming and death of his prophets, God had to hold back his anger and send Jesus, to give people the chance to recognise him as the true Son of God. The religious rulers were being given the chance, that they might be able to fan into flames the dying embers of their sense of honour and shame.

It was Jesus and not the House of Annas that had both the right to the spiritual heritage of the Jews and define the means of inheriting eternal life. This was what Jesus was passionate about. This is why he cleansed the temple. This is why he challenged the temple authorities. They had to be given a chance to mend their ways.

But unlike the King of Jordan whose mission of vulnerability paid dividends, the tenants had no remnants of shame left, the son was thrown from the vineyard and was killed outside. To kill him inside the Vineyard would have defiled the grapes and made them worthless. In the same way Jesus knew that the tenants of the Temple would not be recognising him for who he was and given him the honour he was due, He had been sent by his Father, and was now facing death at the hands of these tenants. This parable is prophesying his own death. There would be no shame kindled in the Religious rulers, and the Son of God would be taken out of the temple and killed.

New Tenants

Then Jesus asked the listeners what will happen to the tenants, who have proved themselves to have to no vestige of shame or honour, and failed to respect the Son.

¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

The parable of the Vineyard is much milder than Isaiah’s song in which he prophesied that the destruction of Judah and its people. In the parable the vineyard is not criticised, or in any way threatened. It is the tenants that are criticised. Jesus prophecy is directed against the religious leaders and temple authorities, not against the nation which deserved better leaders, a better shepherd. The people understood that they were not being blamed and loved Jesus all the more. The delegation of chief priests, elders and teachers of the law, knew the parable was about them, and they were determined all the more now to kill him, ironically fulfilling the parable said against them.

Judgement (more faithful leadership) - ‘Stone of Offence’

An astonished crowd on hearing that the current rulers would be brought down and replaced, said God forbid. Could this really happen, the authority of the seemingly invincible House of Annas come tumbling down. Jesus responds

*“Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?
18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.’”*

The Jews wanted judgement to be dished out to the other nations. In rejecting Jesus, this stone, this cornerstone would be used to build a new type of temple, a new order of worship, a world-wide movement where the followers of Jesus, themselves become the temples of his Holy Spirit. He is the chief feature in this new Church, that represents the Kingdom of God. He is the standard by which everything and everyone else is to be judged. He is the cornerstone which will grow and grow and inhabit the earth. [Using the imagery of Daniel 2v34 & 44]

If you are not part of this new world movement, then you will be an enemy against it, and eventually will face judgement as an enemy of God. One rabbi once said if you drop a pot onto a stone, woe to the pot; if you drop a stone onto a pot, then woe to the pot. Either way, woe to the pot!

Enemies of God - testimony

I joined Highbury Church for 6 months to set up a Christian youth group that we called Hy-tec. I stayed 10 years! It was a wonderful experience in which I was greatly supported by the Church and given freedom to work out this ministry in how I felt best. This year I will be back to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the group which is still going strong. Praise the Lord. After several years I set up another group called The Ocracy on a Saturday evening, for young adults 16-25. These were resource intensive alternative worship services alternatively using Rock music and club music each time. I had a strong team of young helpers to set up all the projectors, lights, and screen etc that we used. It put Highbury on the front edge of alternative worship with this age group, and it led to me being interviewed about the services on local radio and even national TV (Well Channel 5 !). On the team were some Christians with a strong faith, but others who had not yet made commitments but were being drawn in. They were very exciting times. In only its second year though, it started going wrong. A middle-aged couple in the neighbourhood took offence at the services, the biggest complaint being the flashing lights we used, and they started coming in and disrupting our services, telling lies about us and turning these lies into complaints against us to the local council and church leaders. The man was a well-respected business owner in legal work, and his persuasion was such that the Ocracy services and thus the ministry and outreach to young adults was stopped, never to start again.

It was a very dark day for me when I found this out, and I fought hard to control my immediate emotions. My team was disbanded and I ended up doing youth work on the streets of the local estate with some of the team, but it wasn't right for them and soon I was working with young offenders and drug addicts on my own. I was angry not with the Church, but with the couple that had caused this. I began to feel lonely and separated from God, no matter how hard I tried to serve him, there was no longer that closeness I had once felt. This lasted for several years. It was compounded because the team I had built up had become both my friends as well as providers of Christian support and encouragement which I was now bereft of. Many things started going wrong for me. I returned to my old church and after a while started building a new ministry. It was only recently whilst being prayed for that I realised after so many years I was still holding anger in my heart for what had happened, and had to release this by praying for those that has caused my hurt. By this time, the man had committed serious business offenses which had landed him in prison. If only I had responded in love at the time, gone to talk with them, prayed for God's blessing on their lives – perhaps their lives would have turned out differently and mine too. But I was too immature in my faith at the time to realise this.

Jesus was a wonderful man, full of love and compassion, accepting of everyone, and healing countless sick people. Yet he still had people that hated him. Romans 5v10 says that ¹⁰*We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son.* Paul is saying here that those who have not accepted Jesus into their lives are enemies of God, so it should not be surprising that some of them on some occasions will rise up against the good works that you are doing for him, or attack you and your faith in other ways.

We are often surprised when we get personal attacks but as Christians we should not be. If it angers us for a while, don't forget Jesus got angry too at injustice, hence the cleansing of the temple. Yet Jesus was soon back to normal teaching peacefully in the temple having had his say, still loving his persecutors.

Three years ago, I had a similar experience, where lies were told about me and my ministry was taken off me. It felt like history repeating itself, and again it was a dark time and no less hurtful. My closest companions told me to walk out and having nothing more to do with them. Yet, I knew I had done no wrong, and whilst it was sad to let go of my work amongst the young people that I knew so well, I did my very best to respond in love. I admit to a few moans and complaints, but I got myself to the position where I could pray for and love those that had conspired against me. I controlled my anger, and did my best to respond in vulnerability and love, like the vineyard owner, like King Hussein of Jordan. The difference was incredible, and I started to feel closer to God and received more blessings, and felt more power and love from God that I had ever done before or could have wished for. The persecution, and the right response to it, had driven me deeper into God's arms. But why am I surprised, Jesus told us this in the Sermon on the Mount

¹⁰ "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. "Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always got into this kind of trouble. [Matthew 5v10-12; Message]

By letting anger have a comfy home within me, no matter how justified it seemed at the time to let it stay, I had unknowingly built a barrier between myself and God which made intimacy with Him difficult. However by later responding in love and vulnerability to my new oppressors I had unknowingly opened a door through which God could access me more fully, so I enjoy more fully his love, his presence, his power and his joy.

Conclusions:

God planted us, his vines, in this country, under his protection to live in truth and righteousness and produce good fruit for him. May God give our vineyard wise tenants, in other words give our Churches wise leaders, that will teach us and lead us in ways that true to God the Father.

He first sent his prophets, but then he sent **his Son** for you and me, to live with us in our churches, and in our lives. He is central to this story. He is central to our lives. Jesus never came to claim the old temple, that the religious rulers clung on to, but came for the right to interpret God's Word to us through the ages. To teach this deep into our hearts from Genesis to Revelation to lead us into eternal life. We now become the temple. He lives in us. If we do not have him as our cornerstone and be part of what he is building in this world, the Kingdom of God, then we will find ourselves against him, and if we stay opposed to God then it will ultimately destroy us, as the pot is destroyed by the stone.

Then he sent his **Spirit**. Others who are opposed to God, will quite naturally at times become opposed to what we are doing. His enemies will rise up at times in our lives and become our enemies. Persecution and even violence could come against us, and we will be angered by it. Yet Jesus makes freely available to us his Holy Spirit, and by the power of his Spirit, like the Vineyard owner, we are in a position of strength not weakness over our enemies. But at times he calls us to hold back our anger, and to not use this power, but to respond with love and vulnerability. It's a hard call, but one that frees us from our anger and drives us closer into the arms of our loving God.

Pray with me. Lord be in the centre of my life, and help me to be quick to lay down my anger, and be sure to respond with your love, whatever comes against me. Amen.

Bullets

Lk 20v9-18

Our Anger – Vineyard owner decision.

Song of the Vineyard (Is 5 v1-6) /Babylon

Context – Triumphant Entry & Temple Coup

A recast parable – wealthy romans

3 servants CF prophets – retribution expected

Owner decision: CF Kings David & Hussein

My beloved son – Time fulcrum

Kill the son - Israelites(vine) v Annas (tenants)

Inheritance – Old (Word) v New (Eternal life)

Read v17&18 Cornerst' (new temple). StonevPot.

Enemies of God / Ocracy /Jesus hated/ 2nd blow

Jesus told us this - Read Matthew 5v10-12

Don't be bitter – be better

End: God planted us / Son central-new temple /

Spirit – power/vulnerability – hold back anger.